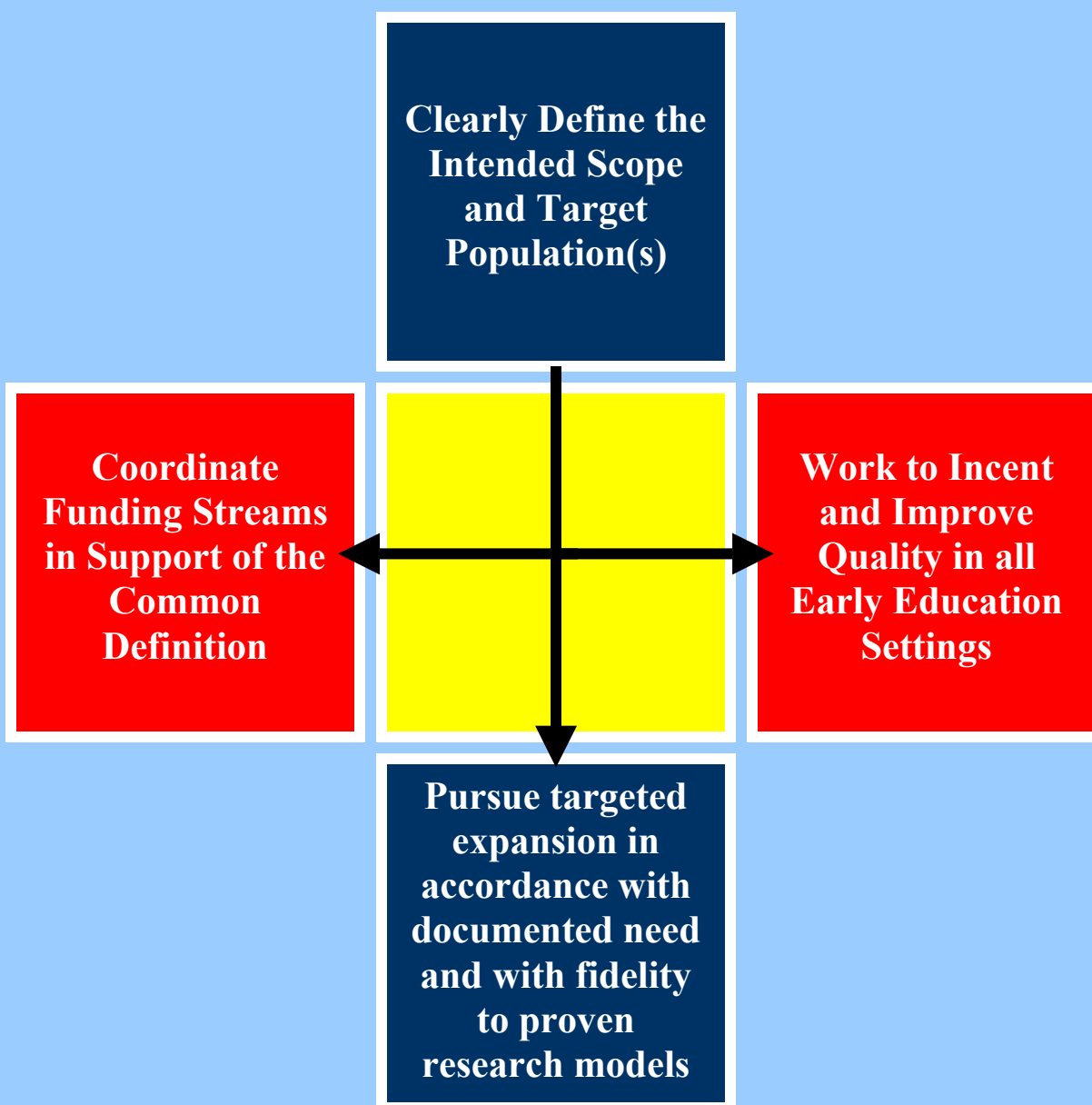




Publicly Funded Pre-Kindergarten in South Carolina:

Coordinating Resources for Greater Impact



Statement of Purpose

Promoting the early development of South Carolina's children is the duty of *parents and families* - many of whom confront the necessity of sharing this responsibility with one (or more) of the state's public, private, and/or faith-based early education providers. While honoring the importance of *active, participatory parenting*, policy makers must also be mindful that 66% of SC mothers are active in the workforce - *making the availability and affordability of high quality early childhood settings* issues of significant consequence for

the state's educational and economic future.

This document contains an analysis of and a series of recommendations relating primarily to South Carolina's **publicly funded pre-kindergarten programs*** (with a special emphasis upon programs serving four-year-olds). *This emphasis should not be misconstrued as a suggestion that high quality pre-kindergarten programming exists only within the public sector, nor as any attempt to diminish the efforts of parents opting to forego center-based early education in favor of providing important early learning opportunities within their homes.*



*Readers should be aware that for the purposes of this document the term "**publicly funded pre-kindergarten programs**" extends beyond those funded by the SC General Assembly to include all programs operating with public dollars.

The First Steps Board of Trustees is authorized to "assess and develop recommendations: for ensuring coordination and collaboration among service providers at both the state and county level, for increasing the effectiveness of state programs and funding and other programs and funding sources, as allowable, as necessary to carry out the First Steps to School Readiness initiative, including additional fiscal strategies, redeployment of state resources and development of new programs."
- South Carolina Section 20-7-9720

Background

South Carolina is an unmistakable leader in the field of early childhood education. One of only nine states to offer full-day kindergarten to all children, it has also developed a reputation for the scope and quality of its publicly funded pre-kindergarten initiatives, including EIA-funded four-year-old child development (4K), Head Start, preschool special education, the ABC Child Care Voucher System, and South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness.

As policy makers prepare to consider the adequacy of substantial existing investments in pre-kindergarten (estimated at \$100 million plus for four-year-olds alone), a prerequisite question begs their attention:

For which South Carolina children should the provision of taxpayer-funded pre-kindergarten programs be considered a priority?

The answer to this question is of no small significance, as it holds the potential to dramatically reshape South Carolina's early childhood landscape. Should the state transition toward publicly funded 4K access for all children? Or might limited resources be more appropriately earmarked to provide intensive and possibly even expanded services to those students most likely to experience failure within the state's K-12 education system?

While it is not within the exclusive purview of SC First Steps to answer this question, no responsible discussion of the state's early childhood systems can be undertaken without its resolution. An *operational definition* of the intended scope and target population(s) for South Carolina's publicly funded pre-kindergarten programs is therefore the state's first and most pressing early childhood policy issue.



Clearly Define the Intended Scope and Target Population(s)

Though each of the state's current initiatives is designed - on at least some level - to serve "at risk" populations (First Steps is charged with promoting the school readiness of *all* SC children, but has established service to high risk children and families as a funding priority.), a *common definition* of "risk" is most notably absent within the state's publicly funded 4K programs, currently serving 17,221 children at an estimated cost of \$52.6 million. (Note that this figure includes not only the

state's \$25.5 million EIA allocation, but an estimated \$31.1 million in public funding leveraged by local school districts). While these programs were created to serve children with "predicted significant readiness deficiencies," individual districts are left to establish their own enrollment criteria, with the use of a developmental screening tool (the DIAL-3) as the only common thread.

The *absence of a statewide eligibility definition* not only confounds any discussion of funding adequacy (It is currently impossible to determine whether the state is serving all "at risk" children, as this term remains undefined by any common measure – though the Southern Regional Education Board has recently lauded South Carolina as one of a handful of states already providing more access to publicly-funded pre-k than it has children in poverty.¹), but also muddies the integrity of reported 4K waiting lists – some of which almost certainly capture the number of interested applicants turned away from the state's public schools, as opposed to quantifying *high priority children* who remain unable to access *any form* of publicly funded pre-kindergarten.

Half-Day Child Development Programs SC Regulation Number: R 43-264.1

Criteria for Enrollment

Each district shall develop criteria for the enrollment of children who have predicted significant readiness deficiencies. These criteria shall include the following:

1. A screening instrument approved by the State Department of Education for use in determining each child's developmental level,
2. An entrance age requirement which specifies a child must be three if the program serves three-year-olds, or four-years of age on or before September 1 of the applicable school year,
3. Legal birth certificate issued by the Department of Health and Environmental Control or other appropriate authorized agency,
4. South Carolina Certificate of Immunization
5. Comprehensive Health Appraisal if deemed necessary or appropriate.

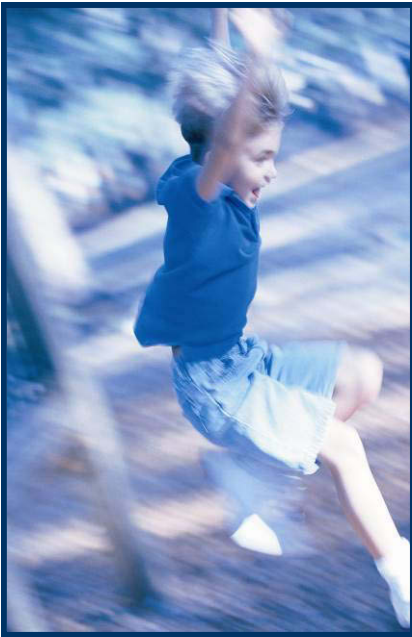
This absence also raises the possibility that students who might otherwise be considered a low priority for taxpayer intervention (some of whom might readily access pre-kindergarten in the private sector) are filling spaces more appropriately devoted to others. (Only 52% of the 4K cohort tracked in the SC Department of Education's 2004 report, *What is the Penny Buying for South Carolina?* qualified to participate in the study's experimental group on the basis of free- or reduced-price lunch status. While there is reason to believe that these figures may be improving, a recent Office of

¹ Building a Foundation for Success by Getting Every Child Ready for School, SREB, 2005.

Research and Statistics analysis of 2004-2005 4K demographics by school district suggests that nearly 1 in 5 participating students currently qualifies for *neither* meal subsidies nor Medicaid.)

While targeting difficulties are almost unavoidable within half-day programs (whose structure poses significant participation barriers to many high-risk families) and programs located in pockets of concentrated wealth, it is evident that at least some of the state's existing 4K investment could be redirected toward greater impact - as either or both:

- a) a low-cost opportunity to refocus our existing investment upon high risk populations, and/or*
- b) an initial step toward expanded service within the public sector.*



Second Year Report of the Evaluation of the Four-Year-Old Child Development Programs Funded Through the South Carolina Education Improvement Act

“Based on our two years of work, these are our recommendations:

- Disseminate clear criteria for what constitutes at risk status for children and families.
- Establish methods in EIA-funded preschools that promote recruitment and enrollment of all children who are at the greatest risk for school readiness difficulties.
- As funds become available or as flexible use of funds is permitted, allocate future EIA funding to serve children who are at risk, or to enroll children who are at risk in full-day programs, or both.
- South Carolina should establish a statewide, interagency professional development system for preschool personnel that will identify professional needs and implement and evaluate professional development activities to meet those needs, especially in the areas of:
 - literacy and numeracy
 - working with families
 - developmentally appropriate practices for children
 - positive child guidance strategies
 - assessment of children's learning”

William H. Brown and Ellen Potter
Presented to the Education Oversight Committee
August 2003

Recommendations

1A. Establish an *evidence-based legal definition* of “at risk,” to include the requirement that state dollars be used - first and foremost - to serve children whose demographic and/or developmental characteristics fall within its parameters.

This definition might appropriately be drawn from markers of poverty and/or a state-specific analysis of the characteristics of low performing students. The state might also consider, as has North Carolina’s *More at*

Four Program, establishing a special emphasis upon students meeting the state’s risk definition as yet untouched by any other form of early childhood programming, and limiting access to students whose family income substantially exceeds the federal poverty definition (300% or more).

1B. Conduct a demographic audit and matched cohort analysis comparing the attributes of and outcomes derived by students participating in half-day and full-day 4K programs.

While the state has traditionally been able to establish few differences in the outcomes derived by half-day and full-day 4K programs, national research indicates that children accessing full-day programming are often at significantly higher risk than those able to accommodate a half-day structure. Without an “apples to apples” comparison, any discussion of the merits of half-day vs. full-day programming remains poorly informed.

2005 US Department of Health and Human Services Poverty Guidelines

Persons in Family Unit	48 Contiguous States and D.C.		Alaska	Hawaii
1	\$ 9,570	\$11,950	\$11,010	
2	12,830	16,030	14,760	
3	16,090	20,110	18,510	
4	19,350	24,190	22,260	
5	22,610	28,270	26,010	
6	25,870	32,350	29,760	
7	29,130	36,430	33,510	
8	32,390	40,510	37,260	
For each additional person, add	3,260	4,080	3,750	

SOURCE: *Federal Register*, Vol. 70, No. 33, February 18, 2005, pp. 8373-8375.

1C. Establish an initial goal of “universal public access” for high risk four-year-olds (across funding streams and service delivery models).

This alternate definition of “universal pre-k” may already be well within our reach using existing funds, assuming their careful and deliberate coordination.

1D. Resist the temptation to base important public policy decisions upon over-generalizations of early childhood research findings.

While a convergence of research clearly supports well-targeted, high quality early childhood interventions, advocates and policy makers alike must be cautioned to avoid over-generalizing these findings in support of unrelated or insufficiently related proposals.

Many of the landmark studies cited in support of universal pre-kindergarten access (the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project, for example) are based upon unusually intensive interventions with carefully targeted children. Though this is hardly reason to preclude discussions of universal access, policy makers must be aware that these same studies could easily and in some cases more appropriately be used to justify expanded programming for a more narrowly defined population of children.

The High/Scope Perry Preschool Project

Perhaps the most commonly cited study of the benefits derived from high quality early childhood programming, the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project has now tracked the lifetime effects of an intensive two-year pre-kindergarten experience offered to a sample of low-income Michigan preschoolers through age 40. The Project's latest findings have been used to estimate a societal return of \$17.07 in benefits for every \$1 invested in the preschool education of the experimental group – *a clear suggestion that intensive, high quality pre-kindergarten pays long-term dividends, particularly for carefully-targeted low income students.*

Perhaps concerned by the growing tendency of well-meaning advocates to over-generalize the study's research findings as support for nearly *any investment* in early childhood, the authors have described in detail the conditions under which the results of the Perry Preschool Project can be generalized, explaining that:

*"A reasonably similar program is a preschool education program run by teachers with bachelor's degrees and certification in education, each serving up to 8 children living in low income families. The program runs 2 school years for children who are 3 and 4 years of age with daily classes of 2½ hours or more, uses the High/Scope model or a similar participatory education approach, and has teachers visiting families or scheduling regular parent events at least every two weeks."**

Responding as to whether the study might be generalized in support of state-funded pre-kindergarten investments, the authors express an optimistic, but cautious viewpoint. Noting that some 40 states now invest in some form of pre-kindergarten, they explain that:

*"the high quality of the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project is seldom achieved in state preschool programs...but may apply to exemplary ones and could apply to typical ones if policy makers and administrators chose to implement the standards of high quality described [within the study]. It is important to get this point just right, neither overstating nor understating the Perry Preschool Project study's generalizability. While the programs do not apply to typical [programs] as they exist today, it is not because the Perry Preschool program studied was an unattainable ideal run by super-educators the likes of which will never be seen again...the programs and findings...are completely within our reach."**

As policy makers examine the needs of the state's high-risk children, it is important that they understand both the limitations and *potential policy implications* of the field's most commonly cited studies – particularly as they may relate to the education of South Carolina's impoverished preschoolers.

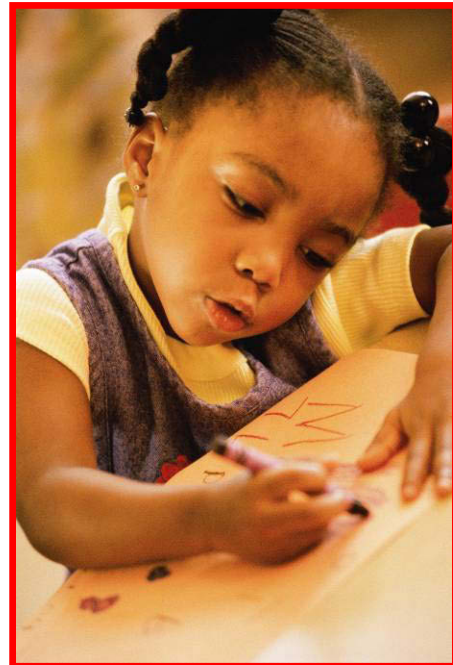
**Lifetime Effects: The High Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40. (2005)*

**Coordinate
Funding Streams
in Support of the
Common
Definition**

Upon creation of a consensus *legal “risk” definition*, South Carolina should seek to coordinate its efforts *across public funding streams* to establish a *multi-provider system of high quality, universal pre-kindergarten for children falling within its parameters*, leveraging the impact of public dollars and limiting detrimental effects upon the state’s private providers. (It is important to note that many private pre-kindergarten providers depend on three- and four-year-olds to help offset the very high costs of

infant/toddler care. A well-defined targeting and coordination effort among the state’s public providers would likely release some children *back into the private sector* and replace them with children far less likely to be enrolled in tuition-based programs.)

Depending on the breadth of the risk definition established, it is possible that some (or all) counties may possess sufficient resources to provide this access currently - given the coordination of existing resources - while funding gaps are likely to be identified in others.



In either case, the development of *well-coordinated pre-kindergarten systems* should be considered a prerequisite to (or at very least a concurrent expectation accompanying) any substantial increases in funding at the state level.

Recommendations

2A. Utilize the existing legal structure of First Steps – at both the state and county levels - to convene the state’s pre-kindergarten providers and assist in coordinating their efforts across public funding streams.

Charged by the General Assembly with convening and collaborating with providers (public and private) in an effort to “*focus and intensify services, assure the most efficient use of all available resources, and eliminate duplication of efforts to serve the needs of young children and their families*” (Section 59-152-20), South Carolina First Steps is not only a natural home for any statewide coordination and collaboration effort, but the only agency with an existing statutory mandate to this effect.

It is important to distinguish, however, between this mandate (to convene and collaborate with all providers) and the administration/oversight of individual components of the early education system. Readers should be cautioned not to misinterpret any recommendation put forth in this document as a suggestion that SC First Steps is the rightful or most appropriate administrator of programs currently operating within public school districts or under the auspices of Head Start grantees.

Instead, First Steps asserts its legal roles as a neutral convener (at both the state and county levels), a flexible funding structure through which community-specific needs can be met, and an early childhood policy resource to the state.

2B. Use state funds to enhance Head Start, not supplant it.

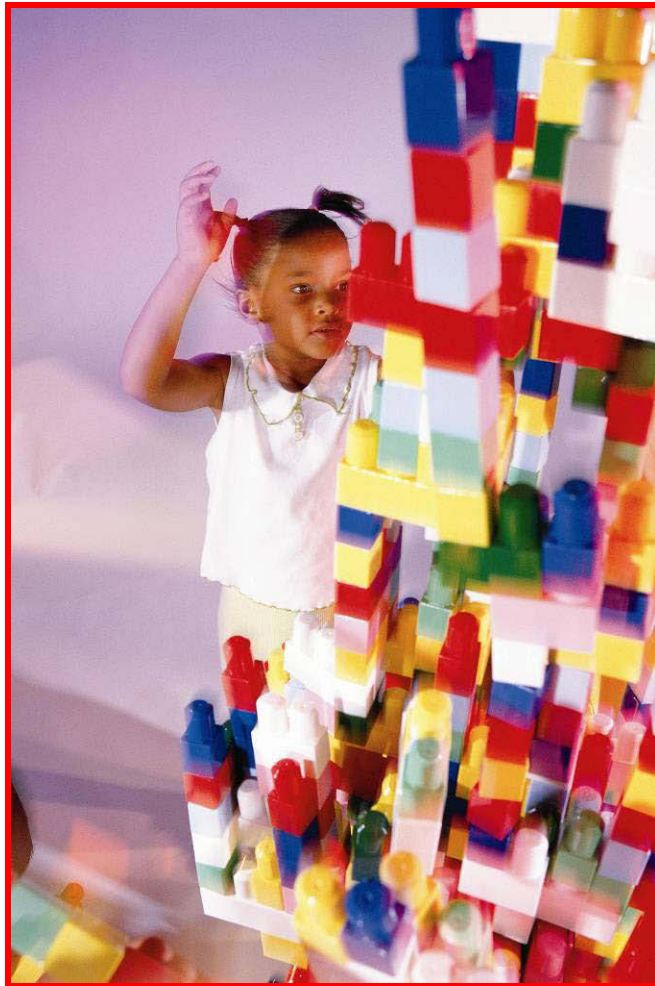
Funded by the federal government, Head Start provides comprehensive services to 12,545 of the state’s high risk preschoolers, including 10.5% of the state’s four-year-old population. In fairness, there are *many ways* in which Head Start regulations and standards surpass those of SC’s celebrated public school 4K programs, and others (most notably in the areas of teacher qualifications and compensation) where these programs fall short of existing South Carolina norms.

While some national advocates have argued in favor of supplanting this federal investment with large-scale expansion of state-funded pre-kindergarten programming for four-year-olds (often on the premise that this expansion would allow Head Start to focus more narrowly upon three-year-olds), SC policy makers would be wise to explore the use of limited statewide resources to incent and enable the elevation of Head Start teacher qualifications as a common sense alternative.

If the state could, for example, supplement the salaries of state certified Head Start teachers in an amount equal to the difference between existing Head Start and school district salary schedules, it could help to place Head Start classrooms on equal educational footing for a fraction of the cost associated with creating new, state-funded programs in their place.

**Work to Incent
and Improve
Quality in all
Early Education
Settings**

Because the costs associated with providing universal pre-kindergarten access to a *legally defined* population of children may prove burden enough for the immediate future (as this goal may require the refinement and/or limited expansion of existing public funding), it remains important that South Carolina continue its efforts to incent and improve quality across all of the state's early education settings.



Recommendations

3A. Redouble efforts to establish common ground with the state's private providers and develop quality enhancement initiatives and/or incentives built around areas of broad consensus.

Few early childhood issues have proven as challenging as the recent effort to establish a voluntary quality rating system for the state's early education providers (both public and private). Its progress hampered by disagreement, the initiative currently sits idle - despite what most agree have been good-faith efforts at substantive revision.

With nearly 7 in 10 South Carolina mothers in the workforce, ensuring the quality of the state's early education settings remains an educational cause in need of policy makers' sustained attention. Whether the end result is a rating system, new recommendations, or both, it is important that the state's early childhood leadership community continue engaging providers from diverse backgrounds and settings in an effort to identify actions and recommendations around which broad consensus can be built.

3B. Examine teacher licensure requirements in an effort to reduce and/or eliminate barriers to the employment of certified early childhood teachers within non-traditional settings.

While compensation is typically cited as the major impediment to the employment of certified teachers in non-school district settings such as Head Start and private child care, the state's teacher licensure requirements also present a small number of reported barriers. An interagency study group, seated by the SC Department of Education's Office of Early Childhood, might reasonably be charged with exploring these issues on the assumption that the employment of certified staff is at least desirable (even if not always feasible) across settings.

3C. Explore the provision of funding incentives to school districts opting to provide pre-kindergarten programming in private and community-based settings.

The regulations governing South Carolina's publicly funded 4K programs have long allowed for the provision of services in non-district settings – though few (if any) verifiable instances of this outsourcing have ever occurred. While there are many reasons that school district administrators might opt out of locating pre-kindergarten classrooms off-site (not the least of them being ease of oversight), there are many reasons that such arrangements might also be considered “win-win” for the state's children and families.

In addition to the availability of physical space within many private centers (a resource often sorely lacking in the state's elementary schools), there is considerable reason to believe that a formal connection with the local school district and co-location of one or more degreed, certified staff members will have a positive ripple effect upon the quality

of the center as a whole – thus better preparing even non-participants for school success. What’s more, these arrangements may prove advantageous for the participating students and their families who would have the option of arranging convenient wrap-around care and reducing the number of disruptive school-day transitions experienced by their children.

Even a small pilot program that might provide financial (or other) incentives to participating school districts would have the likely effect of nurturing strategic public-private partnerships across the state.

3D. Continue refining the First Steps Public-Private Partnership Model.

Should public 4K expand beyond current levels of funding and participation, it is almost universally acknowledged that this expansion would have to include providers in the private sector. Not only would any significant expansion within the state’s public school districts threaten the cost and availability of infant/toddler care across the state, it would require an untold number of new teachers and classroom spaces.

To date, South Carolina First Steps has orchestrated the state’s most prominent examples of public-private partnerships, working in close collaboration with both the SC Department of Social Services and SC Department of Education. Classrooms meeting all of the state’s public school 4K requirements (including a certified teacher paid in accordance with the local district’s salary schedule) have seen operation in approximately a dozen private centers, with positive results, over the past four years. These centers, like all First Steps-funded public-private classrooms, must meet all licensing regulations and have the benefit of additional consultation and support through First Steps.

While many of these private centers have worked in close collaboration with local school districts, others have found their teachers and classrooms to be, at best, a low priority among local public school administrators. A number of centers sought access through an initial RFP process, only to find that the local district was unwilling to serve in a partnership role.



First Steps’ unique history with the public-private 4K expansion model and strong relationship with private providers makes the initiative a natural laboratory for the continued expansion and refinement of these public-private partnerships.

Pursue targeted expansion in accordance with documented need and with fidelity to proven research models

Even after establishing a legal definition of “at risk” and working to coordinate the state’s efforts across public funding streams, it is possible – if not likely – that the state’s pre-kindergarten initiatives would benefit from targeted expansion in even their efforts to reach high risk students. What remains unclear are the size of any expansion required, the programs, sectors and delivery models through which this growth might best be accommodated and the geographic regions in greatest need of targeted assistance.

In any case, policy makers faced with competing demands for limited resources will be wise to pursue a policy of carefully targeted expansion on the basis of well documented need.



“I think the evidence is very strong that family background is a major predictor of the behavior of children. So a disproportionate number of problem kids come from problem families. The simple economics of intervention therefore suggests that society should focus its investment where it’s likely to have very high returns. Right now, that is the disadvantaged population...”

Functioning middle-class homes are producing healthy, productive kids. We don’t measure their output very well in the national income and product accounts, but it’s very well documented that professional working women spend an enormous amount of time after work in child development. It’s foolish to try to substitute for what middle-class and upper-middle class parents are already doing.

I think the evidence suggests that we can target pretty well, and we can certainly deal with the major problems, by starting first with children from disadvantaged families. As an economist, I would argue, go where the returns are highest. At some point, diminishing returns will set in, and you might want to fund early childhood education for other groups. Right now, there’s plenty of room for intervention in disadvantaged families.”

Nobel Prize winning economist James J. Heckman

Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, The Region, June 2005

Recommendations

4A. Explore flexible approaches to expansion (as necessary) to avoid both “one size fits all” solutions and minimize the risk to private providers.

Should the need for expansion be demonstrated (in cases, for example, where a community’s documented high risk population exceeds the number of publicly funded pre-kindergarten spaces available) it is possible, if not likely, that some service providers may be better - or even uniquely - poised to take on expanded roles (including those in the private sector). Policy makers might be wise to consider allocating targeted *expansion* funds through the First Steps structure, as this would provide local communities an opportunity to examine existing needs and resources, then develop solutions accordingly.

In allocating these funds, lawmakers could specifically earmark them for the provision of pre-kindergarten in designated counties or communities. Readers should note that the provision of any *expanded* pre-k funding through the First Steps structure, would not necessarily imply the initiative’s administration of this programming, but instead would allow stakeholders at the community level to plan and implement local solutions with increased flexibility.

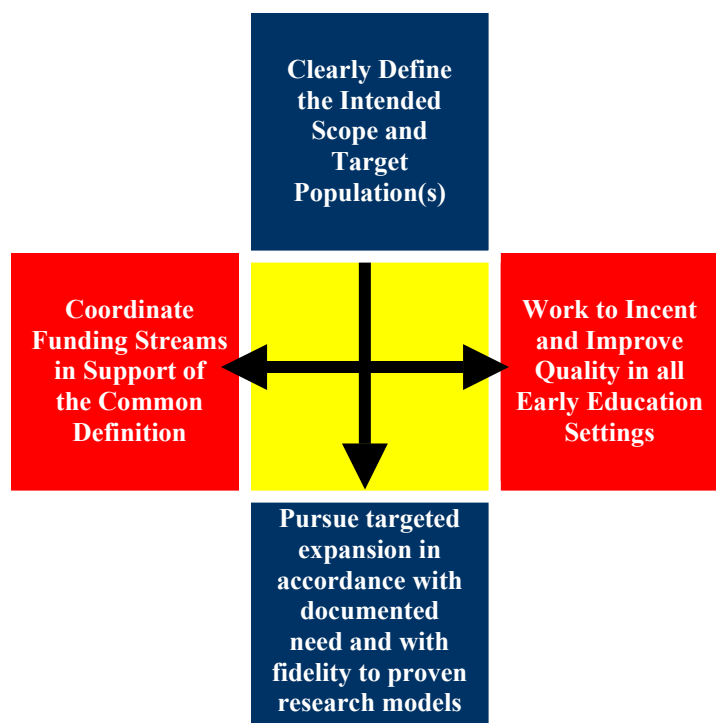
4B. Give careful consideration to providing expanded services to high risk students before devoting public dollars to universal access for all four-year-old students.

Should expansion funds become available, there may be a compelling argument that providing high quality *three- and four-year-old* pre-kindergarten programs for the state’s most desperately impoverished children should take public policy precedence over new entitlement spending for children likely to succeed (and access pre-kindergarten in the private sector) without any taxpayer intervention whatsoever. Indeed this very suggestion is supported by some of the field’s strongest research, including the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project.

4C. Explore the provision of income tax deductions to assist families who choose and can afford to pursue pre-kindergarten programming for their children through non-public means.

While the state may ultimately deem universal pre-kindergarten for all four-year-olds either: 1) too costly in the short term, or 2) an option best untapped in favor of expanded service to the state’s high risk children, there is little question that the state’s unserved taxpayers would benefit from additional assistance in accessing pre-kindergarten on their own. The expansion of income tax deductions may provide an affordable alternative until such time that expanded public access is deemed necessary and/or feasible.

Recommendations Summary



1. Establish an *evidence-based legal definition* of “at risk,” to include the requirement that state dollars be used - first and foremost - to serve children whose demographic and/or developmental characteristics fall within its parameters. (1A)
2. Conduct a demographic audit and matched cohort analysis comparing the attributes of and outcomes derived by students participating in half-day and full-day 4K programs. (1B)
3. Establish an *initial goal of “universal public access” for high risk four-year-olds* (across funding streams and service delivery models). (1C)
4. Resist the temptation to base important public policy decisions upon *over-generalizations of early childhood research findings*. (1D)
5. Utilize the existing legal structure of First Steps – at both the state and county levels – to *convene* the state’s pre-kindergarten providers and *assist in coordinating* their efforts across public funding streams. (2A)
6. Use state funds to enhance Head Start, not supplant it. (2B)
7. Redouble efforts to establish common ground with the state’s private providers and develop quality enhancement initiatives and/or incentives around areas of broad consensus. (3A)
8. Examine teacher licensure requirements in an effort to reduce and/or eliminate barriers to the employment of certified early childhood teachers within non-traditional settings. (3B)
9. Explore the provision of funding (or other) incentives to school districts opting to provide pre-kindergarten programming in private and community-based settings. (3C)
10. Continue refining the First Steps Public-Private Partnership Model. (3D)
11. Explore flexible approaches to expansion (as necessary) to avoid both “one size fits all” solutions and minimize the risk to private providers. (4A)
12. Give careful consideration to providing expanded services to high risk students before devoting public dollars to universal access for all four-year-olds. (4B)
13. Explore income tax deductions as a means through which to assist families who choose and can afford to pursue pre-kindergarten services through non-public means. (4C)

Publicly Funded Pre-Kindergarten Programs Serving Four-Year-Olds in South Carolina

Estimated Four-Year-Old Population in South Carolina: 56,054¹

Public 4K in South Carolina

Total children served in public 4K (04-05): 17,755²
Percentage of overall children served in public 4K: 31.67%

Full-Day Programming

Number of children served full-day: 9,653²
Percentage of 4K participants served full-day: 54.37%
Estimated minimum number of full-day classrooms: 483³
Estimated minimum cost full-day 4K*: \$39,606,000⁴

Half-Day Programming

Number of children served half-day: 8,102²
Percentage of 4K participants served half-day: 45.63%
Estimated minimum number of half-day sessions: 406³
Estimated minimum cost of half-day 4K: \$16,646,000⁴

Estimated Public Spending on 4K in SC:

EIA 4K funding (05-06) \$56,252,000⁵
\$21,532,678⁶
Estimated non-EIA funds devoted to 4K: \$34,719,322⁷
(First Steps 4K funds 05-06, included in above) \$4,600,000⁸

Estimated programmatic spending, per child (FULL-DAY):

\$4,102.97⁹

Estimated programmatic spending, per child (HALF-DAY):

\$2,054.59⁹

Head Start in South Carolina

Total children served (three- and four-year olds): 12,561¹⁰
Estimated number of four-year-olds served: 6,059 (48.24%)¹⁰
Percentage of SC four-year-olds served by Head Start: 10.81%

SC Head Start Funding in 2004-05:

\$81,718,067¹⁰
Estimated HS spending on four-year-olds: \$39,420,796¹¹

Preschool Special Education in South Carolina

Percentage of SC four-year-olds receiving special education services: 6.70% (3,756)¹²

Estimated percentage of SC four-year-olds receiving unduplicated classroom-based pre-kindergarten programming via special education: 3.35% (1878)¹³

Estimated spending on preschool special education serving four-year-olds in South Carolina: PENDING¹⁴

ABC Child Care Vouchers

Estimated number of SC four-year-olds receiving child care assistance through ABC voucher program: 2,395¹⁵

Percentage of four-year-olds receiving ABC vouchers: 4.27%

Estimated spending on ABC vouchers targeted at four-year-olds: \$7,903,500¹⁶

ACCESS to Publicly Funded Pre-Kindergarten Programs for Four-Year-Olds in South Carolina

Type of Pre-K Programming	Number of SC Four-Year-Olds Served	Percentage of SC Four-Year-Olds Served
Public 4K (EIA, First Steps, Title One, Local, etc.)	17,755	31.67%
Head Start (4-yr-old participation only)	6,059	10.81%
Totals:	23,814	42.48% (4K + Head Start only. Access estimate does not including Preschool Special Education and ABC vouchers in an effort to provide an unduplicated count. ¹⁷)

Public SPENDING devoted to Pre-Kindergarten Programs for Four-Year-Olds in South Carolina

Program	Estimated Public Spending Devoted to Four-Year Old Programming
Public 4K	\$56,252,000 (includes all public spending: EIA, First Steps, Title One, Local)
Head Start	\$39,420,796 (48.24% of overall spending)
Preschool Special Education	PENDING
ABC Child Care Vouchers to Four-Year-Olds	\$7,903,501
Estimated Annual Public Spending:	\$103,576,297

Footnotes:

- SC Office of Research and Statistics (ORS) estimate drawn from US Census Bureau Population Estimate 2004
- SC Department of Education, Office of Early Childhood Education (Early Childhood Assets Studies, December 2005)
- Exact classroom counts are not available. Estimated minimum number of classrooms is based upon student counts and a maximum group size of 20.
- Average costs are programmatic only (staffing and supplies), and estimated at \$82,000 per full-day classroom and \$41,000 per half-day session. The SC Department of Education is currently reviewing the early childhood assets studies completed by each of the state's 85 school districts. This data, upon release, may provide a more precise portrait of actual spending – which is likely to surpass the conservative estimates provided here.
- Total estimated cost is the sum of estimated full-day and half-day cost estimates.
- Total EIA 4K allocations to school districts. Note that this figure does not include \$300,000 earmarked for Early Childhood Assets Studies. Source: FY 2005-2006 EIA Program Report on Half-Day 4K, SC Department of Education, Office of Early Childhood Education.
- Estimate of non-EIA funds is derived from estimated total cost, minus EIA 4K allocation. These non-EIA sources - all public - include First Steps, federal and local funds.
- South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness
- These per child programmatic spending estimates (which include staffing and supplies only) are premised upon the classroom costs detailed in #4 above and a maximum class size of 20.
- South Carolina Head Start Collaboration Office (South Carolina Head Start Census, December 2005)
- This estimate constitutes 48.24% of the state's overall Head Start allocation. (48.24% of participants are four-years-old.)
- SC Department of Education Office of Exceptional Children, 2004-2005 IDEA/FAPE reporting. Note that this figure (3,756 children) includes all special education services provided in all settings – including 4K, Head Start and child care.
- In an effort to distinguish between students receiving any special education service (itinerant speech therapy, for example) and students receiving a classroom-based pre-kindergarten experience via special education, the overall figure of 3,756 has been divided in half to create an estimate of 1,878 (3.35% of children) thought to access classroom-based services via preschool special education. Because some of these children may have been captured in the 4K access figures provided as part of the December 2005 Early Childhood Assets data provided by school districts, this figure has been removed from the access table above in an effort to provide an unduplicated estimate of statewide Pre-K access.
- An estimate of special education spending devoted to four-year-old programming is, as yet, unavailable.
- SC Department of Social Services estimate, October 2005
- Estimated voucher cost of \$3,300 per child provided by SC Department of Social Services. Total estimated cost is derived by multiplying estimated number of children (2,395) by estimated voucher cost (\$3,300).
- ABC Voucher recipients and Preschool Special Education students are not included in the access table in an effort to provide an unduplicated count. Some public 4K participants also receive ABC vouchers to provide wrap-around care, though this exact figure is unavailable. Additionally, it is likely that some (but not all) students accessing Pre-K through special education may be reflected in the 4K counts provided by school districts above.